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## **RIBBON CUTTING CELEBRATION FOR THE ALAN RICH ENVIRONMENTAL PARK ON THE MILLER'S RIVER IN ATHOL**

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Secretary, Stephen R. Pritchard today, celebrated the completion of the Alan Rich Environmental Park at a ribbon cutting ceremony in the Town of Athol. The completed design and construction of the park was made possible through funding by EOEA's Urban River Visions Program. Although this park is just a portion of a larger vision for revitalization of the riverfront, the Town of Athol utilized a 2006 River Visions grant to design and construct the Environmental Park that includes parking, a recreation area, and access to Millers River. The river access, which includes a walking path and launch area, is being provided through a cooperative arrangement with the Department of Fish and Game.

The River Visions Program was first introduced in 2002 after it was realized that many communities' riverfronts had become neglected. EOEA funded design charettes to create a vision for riverfront revitalization. In 2002, Athol was one of seven communities, which also included Chicopee, Easthampton, Fall River, Hudson, Lawrence and Worcester, chosen to participate in the program. The Urban River Visions initiative seeks to help these communities reconnect to their rivers by restoring environmentally-degraded areas, assisting in rezoning, funding park design and construction and targeted investments that will leverage private activities in these project areas.

"I am pleased to see Athol is pursuing both environmental and recreation improvements and also revitalizing their downtown area. I am very impressed with the park and town enhancements and I look forward to seeing other towns throughout the Commonwealth do the same," said Secretary Pritchard.

In 2005, EOEA provided funding to six communities to implement recommendations from their Visions Plan. Athol received \$64,000 to complete the final design and construction documents for a riverfront park and two water access points along the Millers River. After design was completed the Town of Athol then received \$185,171 in 2006 for the construction of the park.

"The Town of Athol has effectively utilized the Urban River Visions Grant Program by approaching this project in phases, including design, the preparation of professional documents and the actual construction and completion of the Alan Rich Memorial Park,"

said Senator Brewer. "It is obvious that a lot of hard work has paid off and those who have been involved with this project should be proud of themselves, as they have created an environment that will be enjoyed by many for years to come," said Senator Brewer

Representative Donelan said, "The dedication of this park is one of many recent investments in Athol. Future generations will enjoy this environmental park, and I think Alan Rich would be very pleased with that. Certainly, The Community of Athol should be very proud."

For more information on the Urban Rivers Vision Program please visit:  
<http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/urv.asp#>.

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